

# UNIVERSAL DESIGN



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# UNIVERSAL DESIGN

PHILOSOPHY AND SELECTED APPLICATIONS IN  
MALAYSIA

EDITORS

ASIAH ABDUL RAHIM – MANSOR IBRAHIM – ISMAWI ZEN



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# Contents

Figures	vii
Tables	ix
Contributors	x
Preface	xii
Foreword	xiv
1 Universal design philosophy <i>Jim Harrison</i>	1
2 Workplace accessibility to disabled employees in Malaysia <i>Junaidah Hashim, Saodah Wok and Asiah Abdul Rahim (3062/10705)</i>	11
3 The concept of barrier free in health care spaces <i>Norwina Hj. Nawawi (2915/10709)</i>	20
4 Implementation of universal design by the Kuala Lumpur City Hall, Malaysia <i>Ch'ng Gaik Bee @ Dalilah Bee Abdullah</i>	30
5 Factors influencing walkable in city centre of Kuala Lumpur <i>Shuhana Binti Shamsuddin and Siti Fatimah Ilani Binti Bilyamin</i>	43
6 Universal design in waterfront development <i>Nurul Syala Abdul Latip and Shuhana Shamsuddin</i>	54
7 Public buildings' compliance to Malaysian standards for accessibility and universal design in Putrajaya, Malaysia <i>Syazwani Abdul Kadir and Mariam Jamaludin</i>	64
8 Designing inclusive educational space for autistic children <i>Farjana Rahaman and Asiah Abdul Rahim (3061/10005)</i>	70
9 Disabled facilities in the higher learning institution of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Gombak <i>(5206/10009)</i> Campus, Kuala Lumpur <i>Mansor Ibrahim and Saliza Samiran</i>	84
10 Provision of facilities for learning disabled students in secondary schools: a case study of SMK Putrajaya Precinct 11 <i>(1) Mansor Ibrahim and Nur Syaza Mohd Zubir (5200/10010)</i>	96
Conclusion	112
Bibliography	116

## **2 Workplace accessibility to disabled employees in Malaysia**

Junaidah Hashim, Saodah Wok & Asiah Abdul Rahim

### **INTRODUCTION**

The pervasive concern of disabled employees battling their way into the work arena has increasingly become the focus of public attention. Being a minority underprivileged group, the disabled are too often overlooked by employers in employment (Salleh, Abdullah & Buang, 2001) <sup>(1)</sup> as they are perceived as incapable to contribute positively in demanding work places. Of the estimated 260000 disabled population in Malaysia in 2006, a total of 197519 persons with disability had registered with the Department of Social Welfare of the country; and according to Abdul Rahman (2007) <sup>(2)</sup>, only 4 percent of those registered were employed in the labor market. Generally, on average of 100 work applications of the disabled, only 3 qualified for employment (Razak, 2007) <sup>(3)</sup>.

In Malaysia, more conscientious efforts are being implemented aggressively to ensure increased allocation for employment of the disabled in both public and private sectors. Ambitious legislation, policies and programs are also introduced in Malaysia to promote awareness of the rights of the disabled; and to promote employment opportunities to the disabled jobseekers (Khor, 2002) <sup>(4)</sup>. However, recent statistics revealed the progress being stiff as employment challenges still befall the disabled population; limiting their access and participation in the labor market (Osman, 2003; Kaur, 2007) <sup>(5;6)</sup> and hindering them from positively contributing to the growth of the nation. Years have passed, yet the effort of the government to ensure at least 1% of job opportunities in the public sector is being allocated to the disabled received little success (Salleh, Abdullah & Buang, 2001; Khor, 2002) <sup>(1;4)</sup>. According to Razak (2007) <sup>(3)</sup>, up to September 2006, statistics by the Department of Labor Malaysia reported a minimal total of 325 disabled workers managed to work in the public sector. They were the physically impaired, blind and deaf, working as skilled and unskilled professionals and non-professionals. However, 6691 disabled workers work in the private sector.

Although some companies are reluctant to give way for employment and full participation at work to the disabled on the grounds of their disabilities (Khor, 2002) <sup>(4)</sup>, others fear the costs and risks of accommodating them (Butler, 2007) <sup>(7)</sup>; while only a few are keen to do otherwise as they begin to tap the resourceful potential of the disabled employees who are proven to be loyal, productive (Khor, 2002) <sup>(4)</sup>, reliable and motivated (Hawthorne, n.d.) <sup>(8)</sup> and whose dedication can benefit organizations effectively.

As the issue of employing the disabled have increasingly become the societal concern of the citizens and the legal concern of the government entities in Malaysia, this